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Terry Goddard Reports Almost 1 in 4 Tobacco Retailers Sold to Minors

(Phoenix, Ariz. – June 6, 2007) Attorney General Terry Goddard today announced that a month-long series of inspections found that nearly one in four Arizona retailers illegally sold tobacco products to people under 18 years old.

Statistics from the "Counter Strike" campaign conducted throughout Arizona show that 23 percent of retailers in five counties violated the law by selling tobacco products to minors.

In cooperation with the Arizona Department of Health Services and local law enforcement agencies, the Attorney General's Office conducted 461 inspections during the past five weeks. In those inspections, 354 retailers passed and 107 failed. Tucson and Prescott Valley retailers had the highest compliance rates, and Tempe retailers had the lowest compliance rates. Retailers that failed were issued a citation and face fines of up to \$300.

"The results of this campaign show us where our education and outreach efforts are working and where we need to step up efforts to make sure retailers are complying with the law," Goddard said.

Compliance was significantly lower than in 2006 when 432 inspections were conducted with 400 retailers passing and only 32 failing. Last year's higher compliance rate may be partly explained by a larger number of checks in Tucson, which issues tobacco retailer licenses that are subject to revocation if sales are made to people under 18.

The Counter Strike campaign is part of the Attorney General's Office compliance program, which includes checks of tobacco retailers throughout Arizona. Youth volunteers work undercover with its agents and local police officers to identify retailers making illegal tobacco sales. The youth volunteers attempt to purchase cigarettes and other tobacco products. Since 2002, more than 10,000 undercover inspections have been conducted throughout Arizona.

Arizona law prohibits the sale or furnishing of tobacco products to people under 18. Statistics show that about 80 percent of adult smokers begin before age 18. Every year in Arizona, over 6,000 young people under age 18 become smokers. Approximately 21 percent of Arizona high school students say they smoke, and more than 14 million packs of cigarettes are smoked or purchased each year by Arizona kids.

This year's "Counter Strike" campaign began in Yavapai County and included ads running in local newspapers reminding retailers that selling tobacco to minors is illegal. Following the compliance checks, a follow-up ad ran in local papers reporting the names of retailers that

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passed or failed the compliance checks. Other counties included in this campaign were Mohave, Pima, Yuma and Maricopa.

Goddard offers the following tips to increase compliance with the law:

- Train employees to card anyone who appears to be under 30 years old.
- Install devices that prompt employees to request identification whenever a customer attempts to buy tobacco.
- Post signs informing customers that they will be required to show identification and denied access to tobacco if they are underage.
- Discipline employees who make such sales.
- Reward employees who refuse to sell tobacco to minors.

The chart below breaks down the inspections conducted and passing rates by county and city:

County	Date of Inspections	Total Inspections	Passed	Failed	Passing Rate
Yavapai County	April 28	60	47	13	78 %
- Prescott		39	27	12	69 %
- Prescott Valley		21	20	1	95 %
Mohave County	May 5th	60	51	9	85 %
- Lake Havasu		24	21	3	87 %
- Kingman		36	30	6	83 %
Pima County	May 12th	163	144	19	88 %
- Tucson		100	94	6	94 %
- Marana		24	18	6	75 %
- Oro Valley		23	21	2	91 %
- Sahuarita		16	11	5	68 %
Yuma County	May 19th	55	43	12	78 %
- Yuma		55	43	12	78 %
Maricopa County	May 26th	123	69	54	56 %
- Phoenix		52	40	12	76 %
- Tempe		43	16	27	37 %
- Mesa		28	13	15	46 %

To report illegal tobacco sales to minors or for more information on how to participate in the Counter Strike program, please call the Counter Strike Hotline toll-free at 1-866-342-7855. If you are calling from within the Phoenix area, dial 602-542-1809.

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